

Longitudinal analysis of the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey 2003–06

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Key implications

- This report presents longitudinal analysis of self reported data on offending, drug use and anti-social behaviour amongst young people (initially aged 10 to 25) from the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey, which was carried out annually between 2003 and 2006.
- The analysis identifies a small group of young people described here as ‘prolific offenders’, who accounted for a disproportionate number of offences, including serious offences. This group should be a key target for policy intervention on youth crime. Youth crime policy needs to engage with this group at an early stage as the analysis shows that this group starts to offend earlier compared with others.
- Looking at the transitions that young people make into and out of offending behaviour, the analysis suggests that anti-social behaviour can be a precursor to offending for some young people. In some cases, early intervention that targets young people involved in anti-social behaviour may help to reduce the likelihood of offending later on.
- In order to intervene effectively at an early stage to prevent offending, awareness of risk factors is important to target interventions at those most likely to go on to offend. The analysis reported here highlights family, peer group and school factors as important influences on the behaviour trajectories of young people during their teenage years.
- Current youth crime policy, as set out in the Youth Crime Action Plan, already contains an emphasis on early intervention with families through programmes such as Family Intervention Projects. In addition, young people excluded from school are already likely to be involved in assessments of their needs.
- Further consideration could be given to enhancing schools’ disciplinary policies, given this report’s finding that weak school discipline is related to an increased likelihood of offending and drug use.
- The significance of peer groups, whether siblings or friends, as an influence supports previous findings emphasising co-offending as a feature of youth crime and raises the question of whether it would be possible to intervene to disrupt the spread of offending between peers.
- Further research and analysis on factors related to desistance is required to support policies to reduce re-offending among existing offenders.

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Keywords

Young people
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